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# Insights into hours worked, December 2020

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**Source:** [Labour Force, Australia, December 2020](#)

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With many hours worked series returning to their pre-COVID levels, the ABS will review the future release of content included in this article.

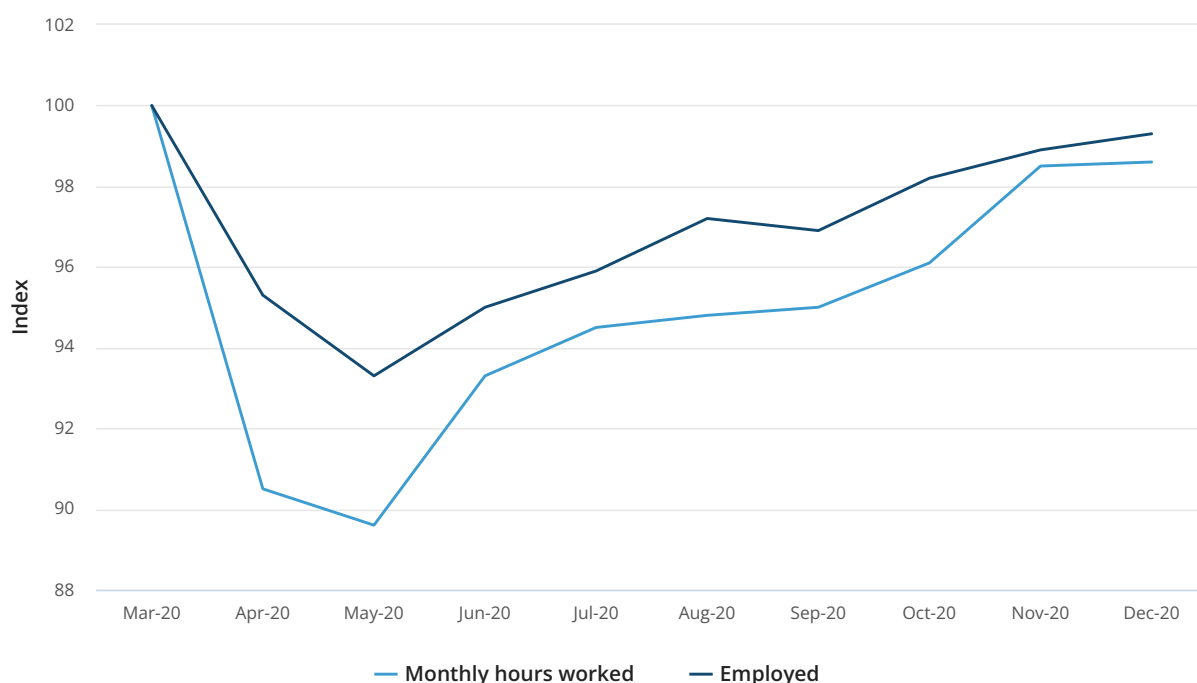
## Hours worked and employment

The recovery in hours worked and employment slowed in December, with hours worked increasing slightly (0.1%) and employment increasing 0.4%. This followed increases in hours worked (2.5%) and employment (0.7%) in November, and increases in hours worked (1.2%) and employment (1.4%) in October.

Since the low point in May, total hours worked has increased by 161.5 million hours, recovering 87% of the 185.6 million hour decrease between March and May.

After larger falls than employment early in the COVID-19 period, hours worked has since recorded stronger growth than employment. In December, hours worked was 1.4% lower than March and employment was 0.7% lower than March (Chart 1).

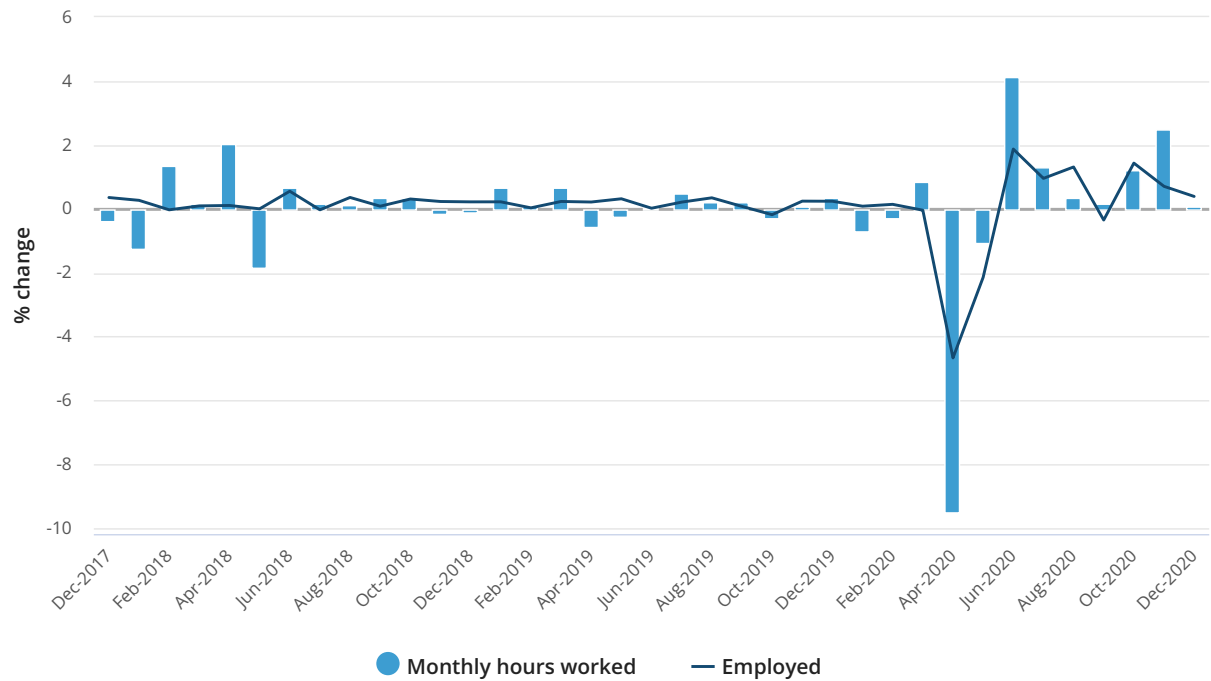
Chart 1: Hours worked and employment index, Seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100.0)



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

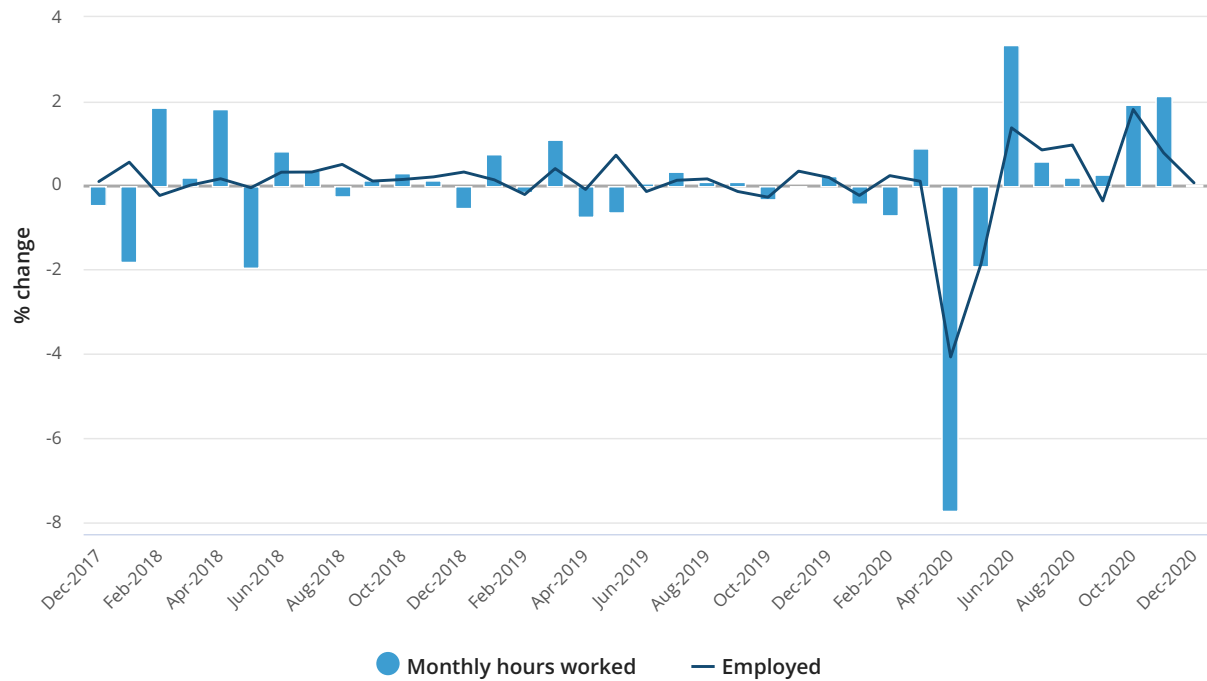
Charts 2, 3 and 4 show the monthly changes in seasonally adjusted hours worked and employment for all people, men and women. Hours worked for women showed stronger growth from May to August, following the much larger fall in female hours early in the COVID-19 period. In October, growth in male hours worked was stronger (1.9% compared to 0.3% for women), however in November growth was again stronger for women (3.0% compared to 2.1% for men). In December, female hours worked grew 0.2% while there was no growth in male hours worked.

Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Seasonally adjusted



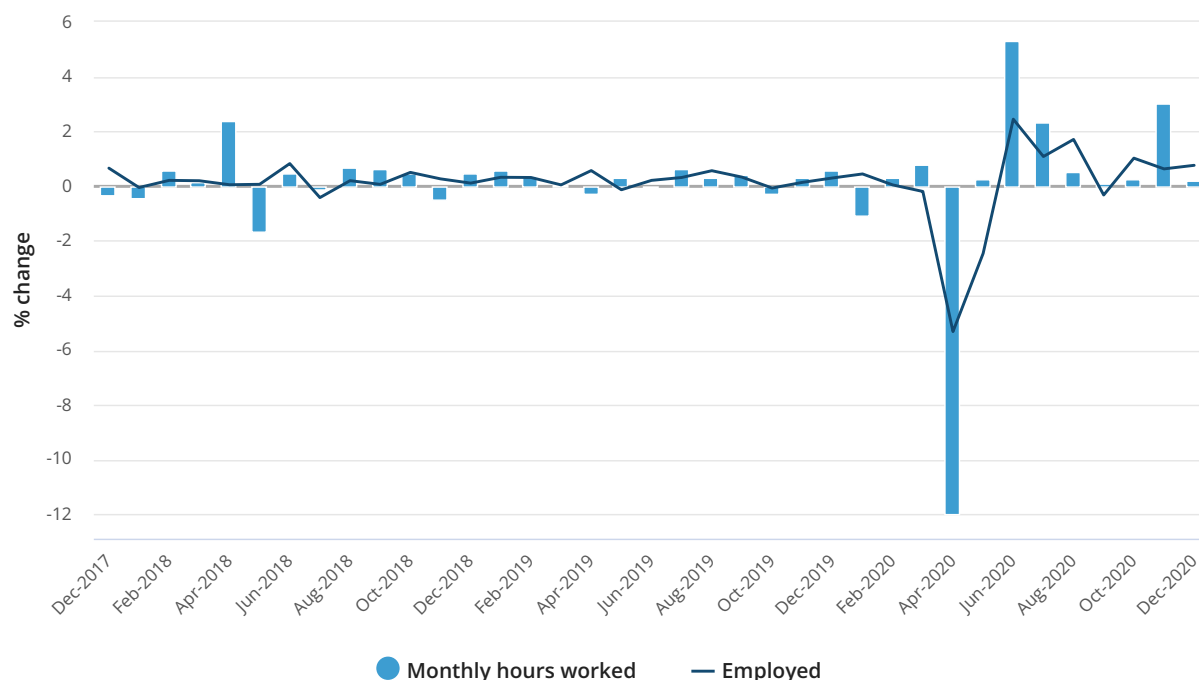
Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Chart 3: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Chart 4: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females, Seasonally adjusted

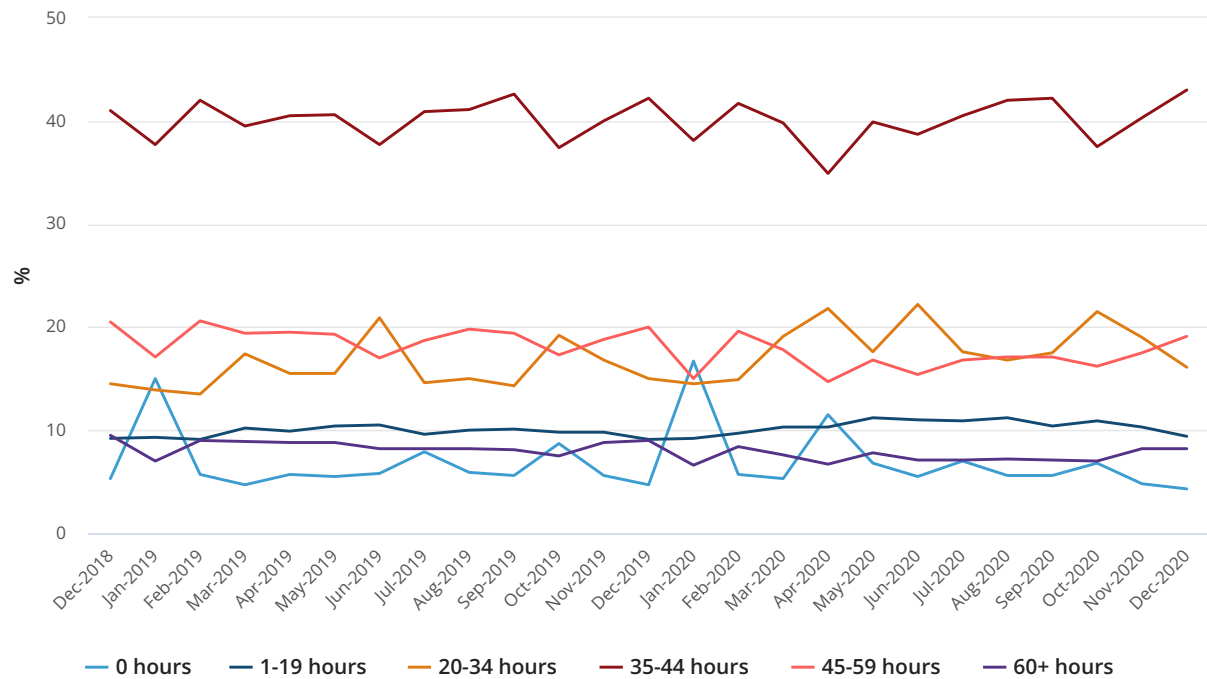


Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

## Hours worked ranges

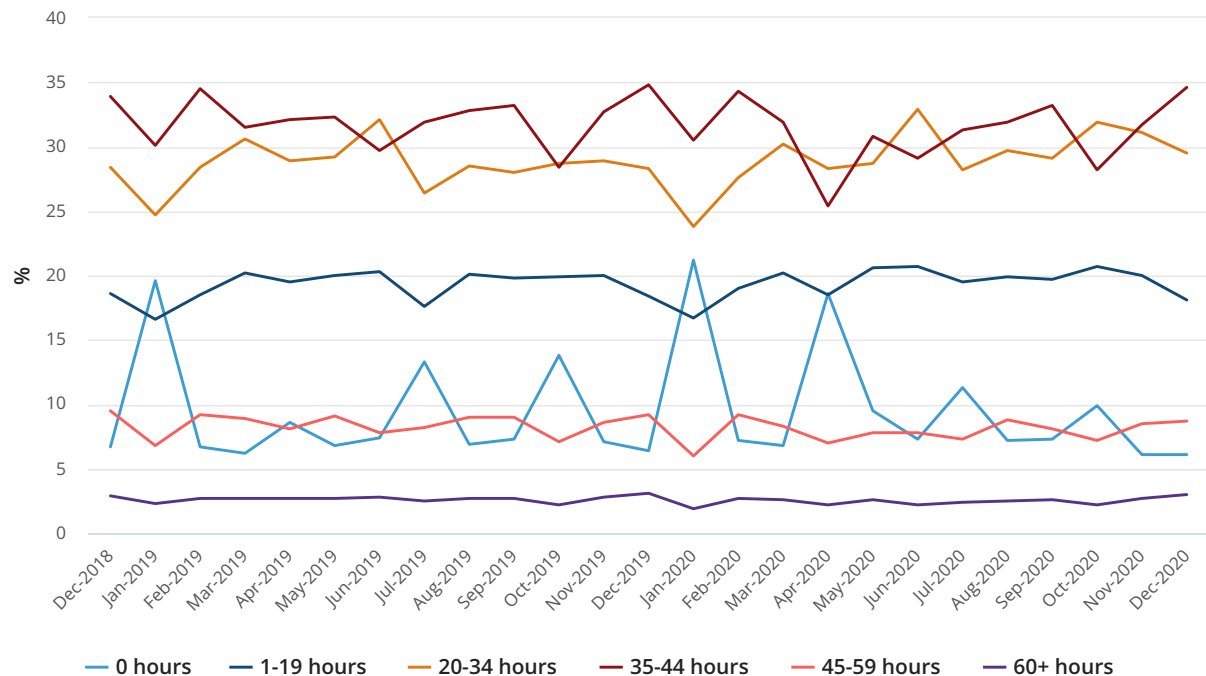
Charts 5 and 6 show the distribution of employed men and women across the hours worked categories over the past two years. In more recent months, there has been a notable increase in the distribution of full-time employed (people working 35 hours or more) compared to part-time employment. Since October, full-time employment has grown 1.4% compared to 0.5% in part-time employment.

Chart 5: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Males, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

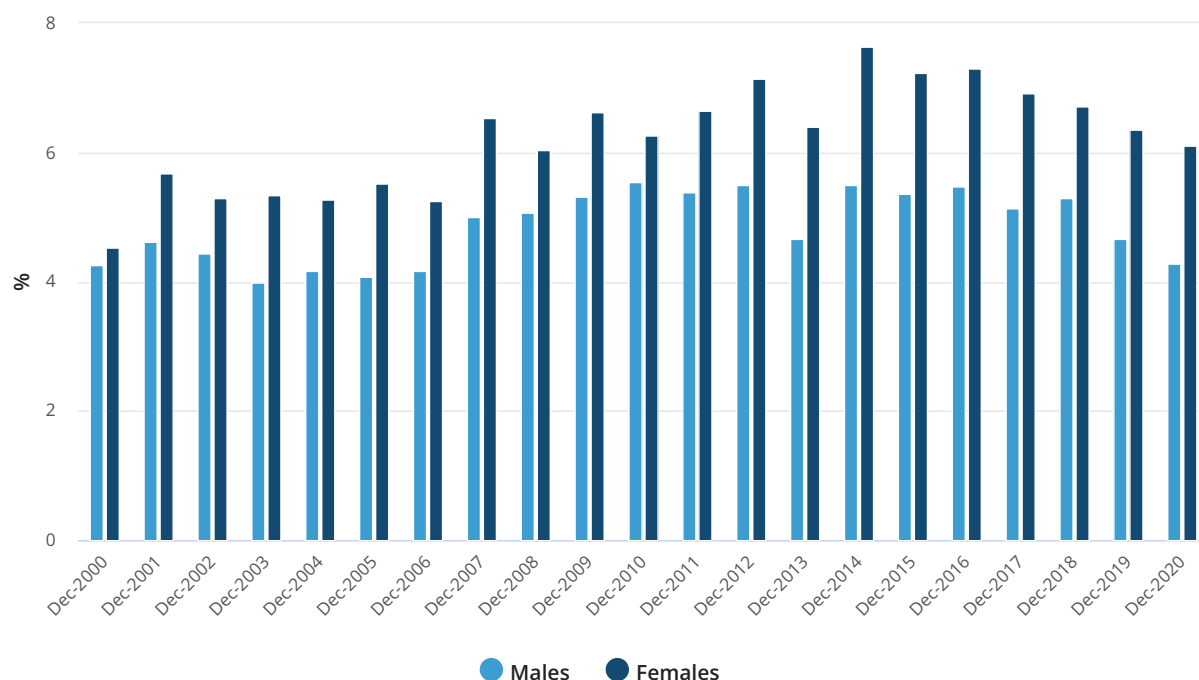
Chart 6: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Females, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Chart 7 shows that the proportion of employed men and women who worked zero hours in December 2020, compared to previous December's, was at its lowest since December 2008 for women and December 2006 for men. These year-to-year comparisons were very different to the record highs for men and women that were seen in April and May 2020 (relative to April and May in previous years).

Chart 7: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

## Flows between hours worked categories

Table 1 shows the number of people in each of the hours worked categories in December by their hours worked in November.

Of the employed people who worked zero hours in November, 25% also worked zero hours in December - indicating that they have been paid for at least some of the past 4 weeks (otherwise they would no longer be classified as employed). A further 11% of the employed people who worked zero hours in November were not employed in December, which was higher than the 9% recorded between October and November, but lower than the 16% recorded between September and October.



Table 1: Flows between hours worked categories, October and November, Original

December								
	0 hours	1-19 hours	20-34 hours	35-44 hours	45-59 hours	60+ hours	Not employed*	Total
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000
0 hours	166.3	97.5	121.3	132.9	51.6	16.8	75.8	662.1
1-19 hours	124.6	1,109.3	474.0	142.5	54.1	6.4	145.4	2,056.2
20-34 hours	125.1	284.5	1,726.9	839.3	137.0	34.3	78.5	3,225.5
<b>November</b>								
35-44 hours	133.3	98.8	463.7	3,402.1	428.1	54.3	68.5	4,648.8
45-59 hours	42.9	46.2	74.8	429.9	839.3	156.2	12.3	1,601.6
60+ hours	17.1	11.4	25.1	68.4	157.2	361.8	10.7	651.5
Not employed*	57.0	208.7	115.9	93.7	20.0	7.7	7,542.7	8,045.6
Total	666.2	1,856.3	3,001.6	5,108.8	1,687.4	637.4	7,933.8	20,891.5

Source: Longitudinal Labour Force microdata

As month to month flows data are only available for the matched sample, estimates in the table have been reweighted to broadly reflect the entire sample.

\*Not employed includes all people who were unemployed or not in the labour force.

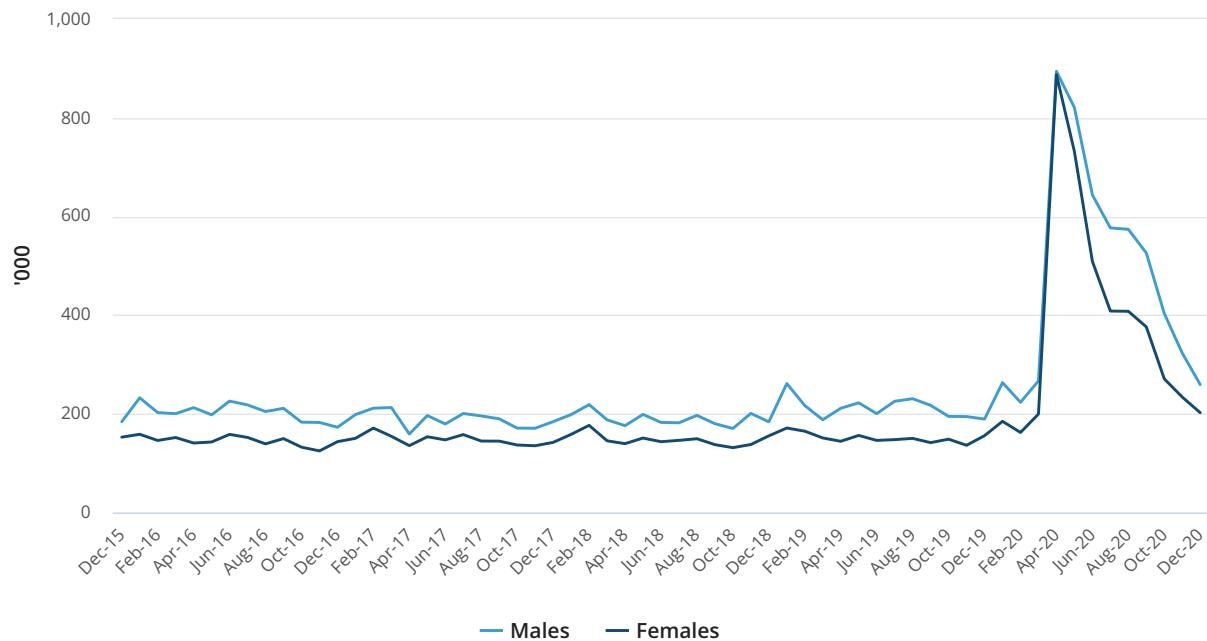
## People working fewer hours, or no hours at all, for economic reasons

Chart 8 shows that the number of people working fewer (or no) hours for economic reasons continued to decline in December. While for both men (259,200) and women (202,300) this is now similar to the levels recorded in March, it is still slightly higher than the average level of the previous five years.

There were over 460,000 people who worked fewer than their usual hours for economic reasons in December 2020, a decrease of almost 100,000 since November and over 1.3 million since April 2020 (when it was around 1.8 million people). This comprised:

- over 155,000 'underemployed full-time workers' (i.e. full-time who worked less than 35 hours in the reference week);
- around 66,000 full-time workers who worked less than their usual hours in the reference week but still worked 35 hours or more; and
- almost 240,000 part-time workers.

**Chart 8: People working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all, for economic reasons, Original**



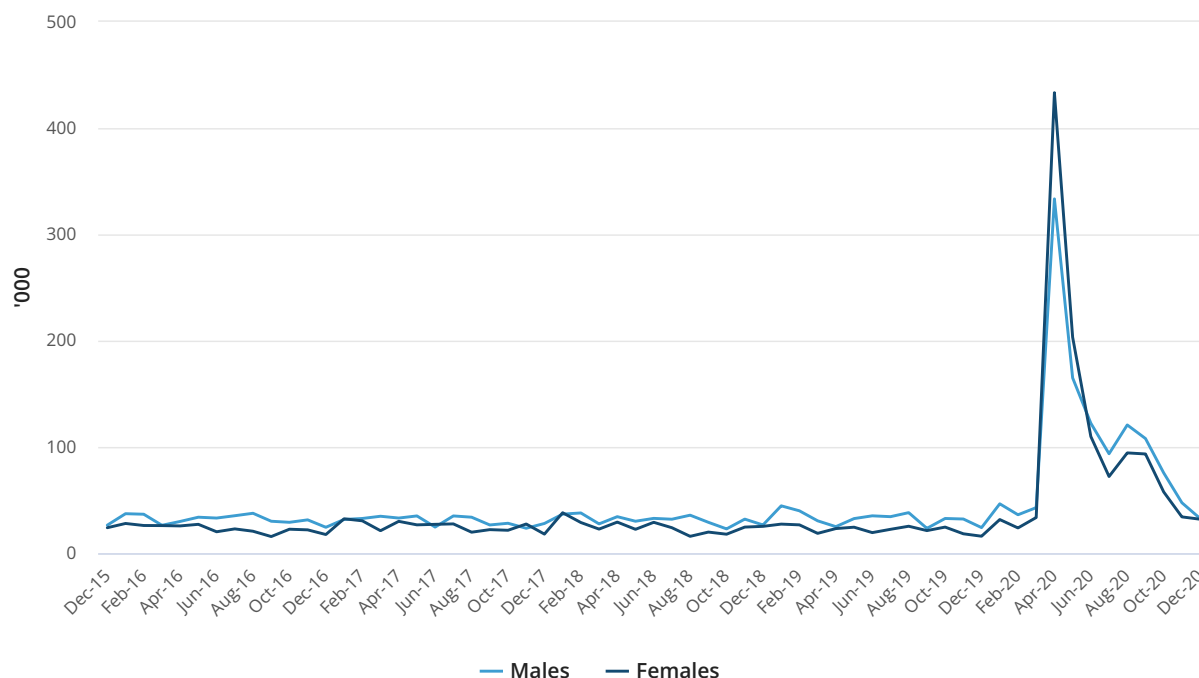
Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2a

Of the 460,000 employed people who worked less than their usual hours for economic reasons in December, just over 64,700 (or 14%) did not work at all.

## People working zero hours for economic reasons

The number of people working zero hours for economic reasons has also continued to decline, and is now around pre-COVID levels (Chart 9). Between November and December, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons fell by 17,000 to 64,700.

Chart 9: Employed people working zero hours for economic reasons,  
Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2a

A further 27,400 employed people did not work at all as they began, left or lost a job. The majority of these people left or lost a job. This has also declined since April, when it was over 350,000 people.

Table 2 shows the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons in each state or territory. All states and territories recorded very large increases in people working zero hours for economic reasons between March and April, followed by a steady decrease to July. Between July and September, in all states and territories except Victoria, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons remained relatively steady or decreased slightly.

In Victoria, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons almost doubled between July and August. However, between September and October the number almost halved, and then halved again in November ( ). In all states and territories, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons is now around pre-COVID levels.

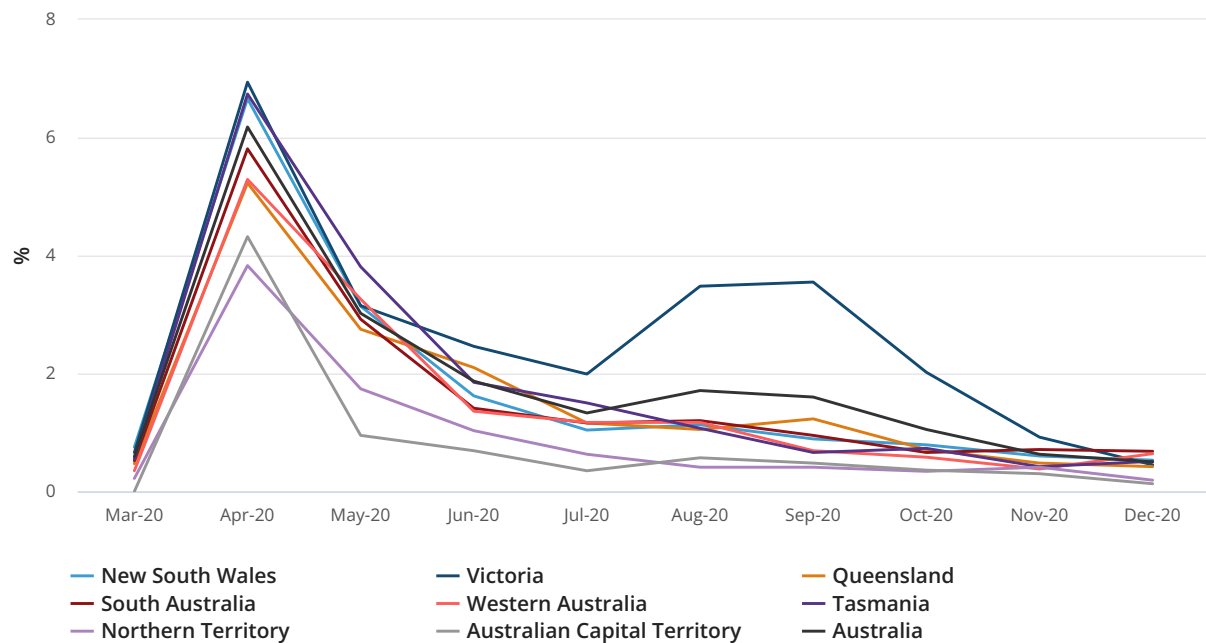
Table 2: People working zero hours for economic reasons, by State and terri  
Original

	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-2
	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('
<b>New South Wales</b>	30.8	261.0	121.4	63.8	41.7	45.6	35.9	32.0	
<b>Victoria</b>	22.7	229.7	102.7	80.6	65.5	112.7	113.5	66.4	
<b>Queensland</b>	12.0	126.7	64.8	50.9	28.4	26.4	31.1	18.2	
<b>South Australia</b>	4.5	47.9	23.7	11.6	9.6	10.0	8.1	5.6	
<b>Western Australia</b>	4.8	69.4	42.0	17.7	15.4	15.7	9.3	7.9	
<b>Tasmania</b>	1.4	16.9	9.2	4.6	3.8	2.7	1.6	1.8	
<b>Northern Territory</b>	0.3	5.1	2.3	1.3	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.4	
<b>Australian Capital Territory</b>	0.0	10.0	2.2	1.6	0.8	1.4	1.1	0.9	
<b>Australia</b>	76.4	766.7	368.3	232.1	165.9	215.1	201.3	133.3	

Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2b

Chart 10 shows the proportion of employed people in each state and territory who worked zero hours for economic reasons.

Chart 10: Proportion of employed people working zero hours for economic reasons, by State and territory, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2b and Labour Force, Australia Table 12

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